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Kalamazoo River dam removal process expedited

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LANSING – The Senate Tuesday approved an amendment to the Department of Natural Resources budget that would study and possibly speed the removal of three dams on the Kalamazoo River.

The amendment, introduced by Sens. Tom George and Patty Birkholz, provides \$250,000 for planning the removal of the Otsego, Plainwell and Trowbridge dams on the Kalamazoo River.

"This site has been called the largest superfund site in the nation," said George, R-Texas Township. "Addressing the disposition of these three dams is an important step in the cleanup of the river."

Negotiations between local, federal and state officials to remove these dams have been ongoing for more than 20 years. Cleanup costs have been estimated at over \$1 billion.

"This in an emergency situation that we are trying to fix," said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. "Should there be heavy rainfalls and these dams were to break, downstream areas would be at risk from PCB contaminated soil. It is crucial to address the issue before we have a catastrophe. This will hold the DNR's feet to the fire."

The amendment also provides for recovery of the dam removal costs from responsible parties by the department and allows for their restoration to the budget once acquired.

The DNR budget, Senate Bill 278, now goes to the House for approval.

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